NEW BOOKS.

A New Theory About Shakespeare's Sonnets.

In a volume of some three hundred pages entitled "A New Study of the Sonnets of Shakespeare" (Putnams'), the author, Mr. Parke Godwin, undertakes the application, and sets forth the results, of a new exegetical method of the poems in question. He begins by describing previous interpretations of the sonnets, and dismisses them all, concurring with Mr. Saintsbury in the opinion that "no vainer fancies this side of madness ever entered the human mind than certain expositions of the sonnets of Shakespeare." A familiar interpretation of the sonnets regards them as merely miscellaneous and discursive exercises of fancy, having no connection one with another and no collective significance. If this be the right view, it obviously renders useless any attempt "to shape a story, reconcile discrepancies, ascertain a chronology or identify persons." Mr. Godwin submits, however, that no one can read the sonnets, even in a cursory way, without perceiving that they form connected groups, each of which has something to say for itself, some story to tell. It is, therefore, pronounced impossible to treat the sonnets as merely separate and individual ejaculations. Again, if it be true, as Mr. Sidney Lee has asserted, of all the sonnets except thirty, that in them the poet had no personal convictions or fellings to express, what, asks our author, are we to make of the fact that, of the 154 sonnets, at least 130 are written in the personal tense? The personal pronouns, "I," "me" and "mine," are of continual recurrence; in some cases they recur five or six times, and the passages in which we find them are generally animated by great fervor of sentiment. Another and more esoteric theory of the sonnets maintains that they are allegories, which, under common, every day expressions, conceal a profound æsthetical or spiritual philosophy. This hypothesis, also, is discarded in the book before us. Mr. Godwin says: "All the efforts that I have seen to detect the profound, religious or æsthetic philosophy under what is else quite simple and in texts more obscure than the original text, and reading the former after the latter, is like walking out of a room partly lighted into a cellar completely dark."

It is the most recent and widely received theory of the sonnets which Mr. Godwin deems the most misleading and pernicious. We refer to the theory that views them as an expression of the poet's unbounded love and admiration for a young friend. For many years after the sonnets were published all the commentators regarded them as addressed to a woman. It was not till 1780 that Malone and his friends began to assert that more than a hundred of them were addressed to a man. About the beginning of the present century it was generally conceded that at least 126 of the sonnets had a masculine friend of the poet's as their object. But who was he? Some have said, the Earl of Southampton; others, the Earl of Pembroke. Of the furious controversy which has raged between the adherents of the respective Earls, Mr. Godwin says that "it has turned out, very like the battle of the Kilkenny cats, in which the contestants swallowed each other. Each party has demolished its adversary, while it has done nothing for its own cause." Our author suggests that, had the combatants paid any attention to the requirements of chronology, they would have seen that they were both barking up the wrong tree. "If we suppose the sonnets to have been written during the period I have fixed, i. e., between 1582 and 1592, it is manifest that, as Southampton was born in 1573 and Pembroke in 1580, they were neither of them of an age to attract the notice of the poet." Toward the close of the period, indeed, Southampton may have befriended the young playwright and won his gratitude, but nothing more. As to Pembroke, born in 1580, even if we suppose the sonnets were written not long before the mention of them by Francis Meres in 1598, he must have been still a lad at college, and not likely to have challenged the attention, much less the unbounded admiration, of a busy actor in London. On the other hand, if we assume that they were not composed until about the time (1609) of their publication in book form by "Mr. T. T." (Thomas Thorpe), Shakespeare was then at the height of his activity as a playwright, "and not at all likely," adds Mr. Godwin, "when his mind was seething like an ocean with great conceptions, to turn aside to dabble in little dirty pools, like those implied in both the Southampton and Pembroke theories." It was evidently an acceptance of those theories which led Taine in his "History of English Literature," to describe Shakespeare as "one of the losels of his time, associating with licentious young nobles, and addicted to the sweet abandonment of love without restraint, having many mistresses, and one at least like Marion Delorme, from whose meretricious delusions he could not and did not care to escape. He was not only the willing but delighted slave of his passions all his life, with now and then a prick of remorse which gave him pain but brought no reformation." What seems to Mr. Godwin most offensive and most to be deprecated in these theories is that they present the poet in an aspect entirely different from that exhibited in his plays, where, "great as he was in imaginative fancy, discernment of character and wit, he was still greater, as Coleridge contends, in clear-sighted, solid and imperturbable judgment." Our author goes on to remind us that, even in the moral sphere amid the impurities that pervade social life, the author of the plays "never confounds vice with virtue, nor asks us, indulgent as he may be to human weakness, to sympathize with the ignoble, the degraded or the false. Why, then, seek too interpret the sonnets in a sense which the greater works avoid?"

The method of investigation which Mr. Godwin has followed is to interpret the sonnets from their own words almost exclusively, and without recurring to any supposed extraneous incidents in the life of the poet, whereof we know but very little, if not, as our author says, absolutely nothing. The result of the application of this method is a division of the sonnets according to their contents, a division in which nearly one-half of them are found to relate to the passional experiences of the poet under the different influences of a true and a false affection, while the other half, or a little more than half, are found to relate to his poetic development, his aspirations, aims, struggles, disappointments and final successes. Mr. Godwin submits that "by this means the sonnets are lifted from a low level of petty concerns up to a high plane of æsthetic interest and significance. They now present the poet during an early formative period of his career, when he was laying the foundation of his character and of an artistic skill which has had no parallel." Our author is unquestionably right in thinking that, if his view shall be generally accepted as correct, it will effect a revolution in an important branch of Shakespearian literature. M. W. H.

When Men Hated One Another in Florida.

We read in a note introducing the story, "In Search of Mademoiselle," by George Gibbs (Henry T. Coates & Co., Philadelphia), that the most thrilling chapter in all the romantic history of the attempts of the French to colonize themselves in America is the chapter, strangely neglected by the romantic story writers, which records the struggle between the French and the Spanish for the possession of Florida. This story is in the way of being a correction of that neglect. "To me, whose profession it is to see pictures in the words of other men and to produce them," Mr. Gibbs says, "this historic page has appealed very strongly as the proper setting for a human drama—an inviting canvas upon which the imagination may paint a moving picture of the emotions, desires and passions—the loves and hates—of men and women like ourselves, against the sombre and sometimes lurid background of historic fact." So far as he has used history in his story, the author adds, he has striven to be scrupulously exact. He has read carefully the original or authorized editions of the writings of Hakluyt, Réné de Laudonnière and a number of others, although, of course, there is nothing of importance to be found in these which is not contained in Parkman's pages. Plainly he felt himself to have responsibilities as a story writer, and it was in no careless or frivolous spirit that his search for Mademoiselle was undertaken.

The hero of this story was Sidney Killigrew, a vast and powerful and handsome young man. He wrote the story himself in his old age. He says of himself in the first chapter: "Before many years are gone I will rest peaceful in the churchyard at Tavistock, and the ranting of any person of whatever creed will avail little to disturb my bones. I shall die believing in God Almighty; that is enough for me." Here is indicated the spirit of hate and rage and cruelty that prevailed between the Spanish Catholics and the French Huguenots who came together in Florida. He goes on: "These blind fanatics think themselves privileged to commit any crime in His name. They speak of God as though they owned Him, as though none other were in a position even to think of Him with any understanding. But, indeed, there is little to choose between the madmen of any race. Twenty years have barely passed since Thomas Cobham sewed eight-and-forty Spaniards in their own mainsail and cast them overboard. Not long ago one certain English soldier in Mexico filled a Jesuit priest with gunpowder, blowing him to pieces."

A temperate man, Mr. Killigrew, it will be seen, who properly reprehended certain extravagancies of his times. "I do not attempt," he continues, "to justify my part in the happenings of which I write, and the terrible retribution brought upon the Spaniards. I can only say that my own intimate life and love were so twined into these events that I followed where my wild heart led, as one distraught. It is enough that I loved—and now love—Diane better than woman was ever loved and that I hated Diego with a hate which has outlived death itself." So the reader, thus assured, will follow the story with a comfortable trust, no matter what happens, for Diane, of course, is the heroine of the tale, the Mademoiselle of the title, who lives to bless the hero's age, and Diego is the villain, and is explicitly dead and beyond the power of mischief at the time of the writing of the first chapter. The archaic quality of Mr. Killigrew's style, it will be observed, is moderate and not distressing. There are plenty of current archaic styles of which this cannot be said, therefore it seems to be proper for us to remark the point and to thank Mr. Killigrew. He continues: "Being but a blunt mariner and God-fearing man, with a knowledge of the elements rather than any great learning of the quiet arts, the description of these happenings lacks the readiness of the skilled writer, from whose quill new quips and phrases flow readily." But his modesty is misleading, as the case was with the great and apologetic Othello, and he really tells his story very well. We hope that Mr. Gibbs is with us in this opinion.

One of the encounters between Killigrew and Diego De Baçan, the huge Spanish villain of the tale, took the form of a wrestling match. "Now, as I measured him by my own stature," says Killigrew, "it seemed, indeed, as though he had the advantage in height, though I much doubt if he had really my breadth of shoulder or my length of arm which were second to no man I had met. But the symmetry and grace of his figure were perfect. The light shone through the thin shirt and I marked the great muscles behind the shoulders as they played when he moved his arms. The collar was open and I could note the swell of the breast muscles as they lay in layers like rows of cordage from breastbone to armpit. The thighs were smaller than mine, but there was more of grace and more of sinew both there and at the calf, the ball of which played just at the boot-top. His eye was bold and clear and he looked at me steadily from the moment he came upon the deck seeking in a way I had seen practised, to create a feeling of uneasiness and uncertainty. This look of his eyes I took to be but a part of the method of intimidation he had worked upon others and it only served to make me more wary of the tricks I knew he would play should sheer strength not suffice." The reader must imagine what a wrestling match between two such men would be, for the account of it occupies the greater part of a chapter and is not to be quoted in full. The Spaniard at one time had Killigrew down on one knee. "The agony of that moment!" writes Killigrew. "He put forth all his power and tried to break my back with a terrific wrench which must have ended me had not my new position given a side purchase upon him. Seeing that so long as my right hand shoulder grip remained he could not get the full play of strength in his left arm, he bore down with his entire weight. In this I humored him till he got me high enough, when, though still suffering grievously, I shifted my grip and took him with both arms one up, one down, just below his ribs. Swinging half to the right and using all the power left me, I half arose and buttocked him fairly, sending him in a great half circle and loosing his grip upon my chest. Yet the strain he had put upon me had weakened me so sorely that ere I could come upon him to follow up my sudden advantage, he had broken loose and gained his feet for a further trial."

The face of the wicked Spaniard was dreadful to see as he came again to the attack. "His wiry fingers," Killigrew records, "fastened a fierce clutch upon my throat, which I could not free. He had me from the left side and I could not well return his dastardly compliment. But as I felt my power agoing, by loosing the clasp of my left arm, I seized him from behind, my right hand going around his neck and my fingers getting a fair good hold in his beard just below the turn of the chin. Here I had the advantage. For he had taken me low down on the neck where the stronger muscles are and feared to loose his grip, while my clasp tightened till I felt my thumb and fingers meet on the nether side of the windpipe. So great a rage I had at his taking me foully that I knew not what I did and as we fell I brought all my strength into play. Though he fell on top of me and my breath was gone, I knew that not death itself could have loosed the clutch I put upon him. I saw as through a mist the mouth open and shut hideously, the eyes, wide with terror, come from their sockets and the skin turn black almost as the beard that half hid it. The hand upon my neck lost its sinew, the muscles of the arm relaxed and the Spaniard dropped over to one side nerveless and powerless, though still struggling against me. The fury did not die out of me at once, and it seemed as though my fingers only gripped him the harder. Then, I know not what—perhaps some weak and womanish pity at his strait—caused me to loose my hold upon the throat, which I might have torn out from his body as one would unstrand a hempen cable."

Killigrew could not have killed him with propriety at that time. It was only Chapter IV. and he was not to be dispensed with so early in the story. But Chapter IV. shows very well what obstacles there were in the search for Mademoiselle. Mr. Gibbs illustrates his own story, and does it very effectively, as well as handsomely. He shows us the beauty of Mademoiselle, the athletic bulk of Killigrew, the vast and evil strength of the mocking Spaniard. Diego De Baçan perishes in the twenty-sixth chapter, which is properly entitled "The Death of the Wolf." It was not the felicity of the deserving Killigrew to kill him. He had disabled Killigrew in a fencing match, when the Indians set upon him and gave him his quietus in their own fashion. Killigrew records: "He made for a hole in the thicket, and I thought must surely go free. But while I looked a number of dusky figures sprang up all around him, and I saw them leap upon him like hounds on a stag. He threw his arms out wildly, and one of the savages who bounded into the air was skewered upon his sword, while another fell away from him into the bushes as though he had been tossed by an ox. The Spaniard was making a wonderful fight, but the Indians, infuriated by the fall of Olotoraca, went rushing fiercely forward, crying that he should not escape. One of them pinioned his left arm to his body, and hung with a death-like clutch around his legs. Before Satouriona reached them, another, more successful than the others, sprang upon the back of De Baçan and, brushing off his morion, struck again and again upon the bare head with his hatchet. When the hollow dulness of the strokes fell upon my ear I knew that the end had come. He swayed back and forth a moment, striving to keep his feet, unwilling to relinquish his hold upon life, fighting even when death had come; then, with a groan like that of some hunted animal, turned half around and sank to the ground, dead where he had stood.

"When he had fallen the savages fell upon the prostrate body like wolves, tearing at the clothing, and would have beaten him with their war clubs as he lay, had not De Brésac and Satouriona come up. I cried out to them that it was the Commandante of the fort whom they had killed. De Brésac was among them, striking with the flat of his sword, and crying:

"'Stop! you dogs! Away with you! Stop! I say!' He stood over the body with his drawn sword while they glowered at him, and would have struck him down had not Satouriona come between. At last the Paracousi, with a few words, sent them away, their gruesome fancies ungratified. It was a dog's death for so valiant a man—pulled down like some wild beast of the forest. When I had been carried to where the body lay, De Brésac and I vowed that he should have decent burial. I hated him, and hate him now. But it was a passion made great by the intensity of it, and I could not bear that the majesty of his prowess should be dimmed by any ignominy at his death."

Mademoiselle, of course, was found. She recovered her confiscated estates in France, married Killigrew, built a summer house, and lived happily. It seems to us that it would be improper to ask for more.

How They Lived in Babylon.

The title of Mrs. Reginald De Koven's story, "By the Waters of Babylon" (Herbert S. Stone & Co., Chicago), is appropriately supplemented on the cover of the book by a picture of the Euphrates and of Babylon itself. In this agreeable decoration we see the great city by moonlight. The moon is generously depicted in its completed stage. It is round and large and chalk-white, in a field of shadowless blue. As if this were not enough, it makes a mirror of the waters of Babylon, so that we have two cities and two moons. The effect is singularly opulent and satisfying. There is twice an opportunity to sit down and weep, but no occasion.

In the opening of the story we have King Artaxerxes going to the lion hunt. He was going forth in the flowering month of Nisan to slay many lions as an offering to Bel. He was erect, exultant, the most beautiful of kings. The darkened rims of his large almond eyes drew close together as he faced the level sunrays, golden light flashed from the jewels in his tiara and from the twin lions that formed his dagger hilt. Three pure-blooded horses, black as night, tinkled the silver bells that surmounted their proud and tossing heads, and shook the gilded lotus flowers that bound their swelling necks, as they dragged his chariot along in a cloud of dust. Their tails were tied with sashes of scarlet. Painted quivers, filled with richly inlaid arrows hung at the monarch's side. At the back of the chariot, fixed in the calyx of a bronze lotus flower, rose terribly his shining spear. Presumably a whole grove of spears, made of silver and borne by that terrible cohort of the Persian army, the Royal Doriphori, surrounded the King as he urged his chariot toward the jungle.

The roar of the lions began to be heard. Beginning like the deep notes of an organ heard from afar, it "grew and increased until it became a mighty, continuous roll, rhythmical, almost musical, with recurring climaxes of sound, which declined again into prolonged sighs, ceasing on the night with a singular and almost human melancholy." A savage joy lit up the faces of the King and his beautiful and meretricious sister, Amytis, who drove a chariot at his side. A noise of crushing reeds; a splendid lion appeared. "He paused as he came into the flooding moonlight. His yellow mane swept the ground, and as he caught sight of his enemies he growled with a hoarse, coughing sound, reluctant, menacing." When the King had advanced to within fifty yards of the lion he pulled in his horses and set an arrow to his bow. "Suddenly the lion leaped to his feet and with long, cat-like bounds advanced to the attack. The quivering horses neighed with excitement; Artaxerxes raised his bow and for a moment stood, silent and immobile as a statue. Then he let fly. The arrow sped straight to the lion's heart." A splendid shot. The lion died instantly, conscious only of a single pang.

Three lions dashed from the jungle and advanced upon the King. Here was a chance to sacrifice to Bel. Unfortunately the monarch, in the pride of his splendid courage, waited a moment too long. His javelin missed its throw, and with a terrible blow of her paw a lioness stretched Artaxerxes at her feet. Up came Amytis. "Mine! mine!" she cried. "I will avenge my brother." She was as brave as she was beautiful, as fearless as she was wicked. The temerity of her courage will hardly be overlooked.

"Across the body of the King the lioness looked at the woman. They measured each other with their eyes. Another instant and the lioness had leaped to the attack. Amytis was armed only with a dagger as she stood fearlessly and faced the raging beast. About her the palm trees made a circle of shadow, but in the open space where she stood the moonlight fell as bright as day. The movements of the woman and the lioness were graceful, catlike, similar. With sinuous, hypocritical feints and sudden bounds they joined the combat. Amytis's blazing eyes were fixed upon the red eyeballs which glared furiously in her face. They parried each other's thrusts with astonishing dexterity, the lioness with her formidable paw, the woman with her dagger. The contest lasted for an eternity, so it seemed to the band of soldiers who stood back in dire consternation, daring not to interfere. They feared that the strength if not the skill of the woman would yield the first; but Amytis's arm as it flashed with its jewelled weapon back and forth in graceful feline sweeps seemed made of steel. The lioness whipped her tail upon her quivering flanks and roared again and again. A sudden whiff of wind blowing fresher in the deepening night tossed the branches of the palm trees. A shadow fell across Amytis's eyes, and a long lock of her hair floated across her bared shoulder and blew into her face. She raised her hand to brush it away, and in that instant with a growl the lioness gripped her arm and with a quick snatch of her terrible paw tore away the tunic from her shoulder; another blow and she had brought the Princess to her knees."

For more causes than one, plainly, was there weeping by the waters of Babylon. It was no child's business, this sacrificing of lions to Bel. In these days it is thought to be bold enough to go out to shoot a lion with a magazine rifle and explosive bullets. It stupefies the contemporary imagination to think of a lady engaging an enraged lioness in a fencing match. We wonder if Amytis had the presence of mind and the politeness to say: "A touch!" and, "That one was on me," when the lioness scratched her.

We are glad to record that Amytis and Artaxerxes were both saved, and that as they sailed down the Euphrates on their way back to Babylon they carried with them a large bag of lions as testimony to their great prowess. It must have been delightful going down the Euphrates in the royal barge at the conclusion of a lion hunt. We read: "The moon was fading in the sky and the shadows of the night were lessening toward the dawn as the King's barge, floating easily down the smooth stream of the Euphrates, approached the city gates. It was a beautiful vessel, long and shallow, as befitted the quiet river, and constructed of ebony richly carved and inlaid with ivory and silver. The prow, a dromedary of gilded ivory, glittered under the rays of the waning moon, and the stern, a painted serpent in green and silver, raised its head above the rippling water. The purple sails, swelling gently in the night breeze, were embroidered with a blazonry of gold and scarlet, and at the mast floated the royal ensign of the Chaldean Kings—Nergal, the hunter god, in a golden circle on his flying bull.

"In the centre of the vessel Artaxerxes lay upon a golden-footed couch, lifted above the deck on a dais and covered with bright Persian embroideries. He lay wearily among the cushions looking out upon the stream in a dreamy silence. Amytis on a couch beside him, had fallen into a restless slumber; a woman slave who had awaited her in the royal barge had bound her wounded arm and now stood near her, waving a fan of peacock feathers before her face. Far behind in the stern of the vessel Arrion and Themistocles sat together on an ivory seat made soft with tasselled cushions of many-colored tapestry.

"Standing high above them, the steersman plied the long pole which directed their passage through the smooth water, while toward the prow the oarsmen bent to their task. Their heavy features, with the characteristic full lips and rounded aquiline nose of the early Babylonians, bespoke the mixture of the Akkadian and the Ethiopian race. Their large eyes were dreamy as those of children. They sang as they rowed to a monotonous, repeated rhythm songs to the river god and to the moon. The lazy, crooning sound, the regular dip of the oars, fell soothingly upon the silence of the waning night."

Pleasant sailing, we should say, and we are free to acknowledge that we should like to make the journey, though we should never consent to undertake the perilous preliminaries. Themistocles, very properly and agreeably, is a chief character in the story. He imparts to the Babylonian court that wise Greek air and philosophical poise which it so needs and which so shines in contrast with it. We are glad to say that he is maintained well toward the end of the story, drinking the deadly nightshade and passing virtuously away only in one of the concluding chapters. There is plenty to refresh and vivify the reader's understanding of the Babylonian civilization. We may read of the feast of Mithras given in Nisan, the month of flowers, in the great palace of Nebuchadnezzar. This was a palace worth seeing. "Over the porticos were inscriptions in gigantic characters, extolling the might of Nebuchadnezzar. Guarding the entrance stood the winged bulls of Babylon and Assyria, and between them flowed a constant stream of attendants and of guests assembling for the feast. Within, the lofty rooms were vast and cool. The floors were laid in alabaster, carved and painted with inscriptions relating the glory of the Chaldean Kings. Along the corridors were sculptured bulls repeated in high relief, and in the great apartments of the King, long lines of bas-reliefs stretched from door to door. Warriors and priests, in scenes of battle and of sacrifice, passed in endless procession along the walls, their painted profiles repeating with strange exactness the features of the living warriors and priests who moved beside them." There were alabaster sphinxes, and rugs of brilliant dyes accummulated by conquering kings, and couches of cedar wood and gold, and ivory tables piled high with golden vessels for the feast. There were musicians, and a chief eunuch, and we cannot tell what all. It would have been fine even if there had been nothing to eat.

Artaxerxes lay on a couch under "the famous canopy of Samos, wrought marvellously by Theodorus in gold, its grapes of carven emerald and chrysolite hanging in shining clusters over the monarch's head." He was attired for the feast in "a royal candys of purple and a scarlet tunic, gold embroidered and encrusted with a multitude of jewels. On his curled and perfumed hair was set the tiara of the Persian Kings, a scarlet cap set with gems, and bound with a white and azure fillet. In his ears were heavy crosses of wrought gold and about his neck a golden collar. In this jewelled dress the beauty of the King was as imposing as that of a sculptured idol. Artaxerxes had inherited the strength and the splendid stature of his father Xerxes, and the beauty of his grandmother, the world famous Atossa. His eyes were large and almond shaped, with an expression soft as velvet and singularly sweet, his lips were full and red, and the nose beautifully aquiline."

The feast began. "Wine," cried Artaxerxes. "I see Nehemiah, whose turn it is to serve." Nehemiah is best known in other of his capacities, but he was a favorite mixer. The wine was flavored with intoxicating drugs brayed in a marble mortar. Nehemiah "advanced at the word of the King and poured the fragrant dust into the bowl. The rosy liquid foamed and Arrion leaping to his feet dipped deep the golden cup. Then holding it deftly on three fingers of his left hand after the manner of the royal cupbearers, he presented it to the King. In his right hand he held the cover of the cup and over his shoulder was thrown an embroidered napkin. Artaxerxes drank deeply, his frowning brow cleared, and looking about

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